

VRT's MOM; Celestine's Age; Musique du Soleil

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 29 May 1998

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Robert Borski — 29 May 1998, 15:59

To Tony Ellis, re VRT's Mom:

Hey, I now think you're dead on about the woman in the cell next to VRT--she almost certainly must be his mother! Congratulations. Any chance you think her name might be Three Faces? (Symbolically, like the Sphinx's man-riddle, she could wear a wild abo face in the morning, a domestic mother-wife face in the afternoon, and a distraught prisoner's face in the evening.) It'd also be nice if we could ascertain her eye color, to see if it's green like her son's (Victor specifically mentions this in his prison writings, so I feel it's important).

A few things still kinda bother me, however, and while I don't think they invalidate your deductions, I wonder if you had any additional thoughts:

How is it that a poor abo girl like VRT's mother, who previously had to settle for Trenchard and was, as you say, ill equipped for life in human society, managed to find her way over to Sainte Croix? After all, it's not like hopping a freight train hobo-style. How would she pay her way across? (I envision a sort of interplanetary Concord, with rather steep prices--Marsch/VRT probably had university underwriting to help him.) And why would an illiterate backwoods girl even want to leave the planet of her birth, her abo kin (including little Victor), and the only world she knows, and go to that strange big blue place in the sky? Also, wouldn't she need a passport of some kind--given the paranoia the government of Sainte Croix seems to be exhibiting, wouldn't they scrutinize the arrival of each new immigrant? And wouldn't both planets document her coming and going, given the tension between each? Marsch/VRT specifically mentions going through customs _and_ being questioned by the military police and _then_ being issued visitors papers. (p. 198). Surely the same procedures would be applied to her, as well would be questions about her financial means, especially if she arrived dressed like the abo equivalent of Liza Doolittle ready to take in the big sights.

These objections notwithstanding (and my problem with them may be more Wolfeian than Ellisian), clearly I think you're onto something.

Now then, back to an earlier argument.

When we talk about ages of people in FIFTH HEAD, we need to take into consideration not one important astronomical factor, but two: i.e., not only are the years longer than ours (+42 days), but so is the daily periodicity (hence Marsch's complaint about the "too long days and stretched nights" that he first experiences at Roncevaux). Depending on how long you calculate the day, the Annese/Croixian year could be anywhere from 67 to 100.5 _additional_ days longer than ours, depending on whether we go with 28 or 30 hour days ({the additional hours x 42 extra days}/24hrs.) This translates in local year terms to one that may be anywhere from 109 days longer (67+ 42) to 142.5 days longer (42 +100.5). These extra days--.3 to .4 of a Terran year--must then be factored into all attempts at figuring out ages. Celestine Etienne, at 28 years Croixian, would then be our equivalent of a 34.5 to 39 year old woman! These numbers

also help resolve a few other age-related difficulties I have, from Number Five's and VRT's maturity at 18 and 20 years, respectively, to how Cassilla the slave girl is starting to look old at 21. But more importantly they help validate my earlier contention that Celestine Etienne is David's mother. David, depending on how old you feel he is, would have been born to Celestine when she was the equivalent of 16 to 18 years Terran. So given some of the other factors I mentioned in my earlier post, I still feel she's in the running for the mysterious lady in pink, the woman I believe is his mother.

Finally then, some music to recommend while reading *New Sun*. For its baroque, medieval pulse, *Dances from Tersichore* by Michael Praetorius (make sure it's recorded with period instruments, though); for its coloration and epic scale, *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky; and for its evocation of timelessness, *Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis* by Ralph Vaughn Williams.

Postpenultimately as well: *CAVE CANEM* can now be had from me in .txt form if your ISP can't handle .doc/Word 6.

Robert Borski